

No. 178.—Petition of JAMES PRESTON and Others, in the Otago Provincial District.

No. 188.—Petition of W. J. WILLIS and Others, in the County of Rangitikei.

THE petitioners state that they believe that an overwhelming majority of the people of the colony desire the introduction of the Bible into the public schools. They pray the House to devise some means of arriving at the mind of the electors in this matter.

I am directed to report: The Committee do not consider it necessary to offer any opinion to the House on the subject-matter of these petitions.

14th July, 1882.

No 167.—Petition of W. C. J. KORTEGAST and other Brewers of Westland.

THE petitioners state that they are brewers in the Provincial District of Westland; that the beer-tax is oppressive and detrimental to the interests of the farmer, the cooper, and many others engaged in local industries. They pray the House will abolish the duty on beer manufactured in the colony.

I am directed to report: The subject-matter of this petition being one of public policy, the Committee do not consider it necessary to offer any opinion to the House.

14th July, 1882.

No. 179.—Petition of TARANAKI LICENSED VICTUALLERS' ASSOCIATION.

THE petitioners pray that the Licensing Act of 1881 may be amended.

I am directed to report: The subject-matter of this petition being now under the consideration of the House, the Committee do not consider it necessary to make any recommendation.

14th July, 1882.

No. 166.—Petition of STEPHENS and STEPHENS.

THE petitioners are the solicitors of persons resident in England, who are interested in the will of the late J. S. Douglas, and appear by their agent, the Hon. W. H. Reynolds. They represent that the widow of the late J. S. Douglas is left in a state of destitution in consequence of the estate having been misappropriated by the trustee appointed by the Supreme Court. They pray for redress. This case has been inquired into and dealt with on two occasions by the Committee during the session of 1881. The Committee reported as follows, after examining the late Registrar of the Supreme Court, Mr. E. ff. Ward: "It appears, from the evidence before the Committee, that money to the amount of at least £1,226 has been received by Edward Francis Ward, as trustee for the estate of the late James Schoefield Douglas, and that no account whatever has been furnished by him to the Supreme Court as ordered by Mr. Justice Chapman on the 5th day of September, 1873, to be made on or before the 10th August, 1874, and therefore there appears a *prima facie* case of misappropriation of the estate. The Committee are of opinion that it was clearly the duty of the Registrar of the Supreme Court of Dunedin to see that the order of the Court was complied with; this duty not having been performed by their officer, the Government cannot escape responsibility in the matter. The Committee therefore recommend the Government to instruct the Registrar of the Supreme Court at Dunedin to take action against Edward Francis Ward, to cause him to furnish a true account of his administration of the estate of the late James Schoefield Douglas; and that, failing the furnishing of any satisfactory account of his administration, to take such further action as may be deemed advisable in the public interests." From the evidence given by the Hon. Mr. Reynolds this session, it appears that nothing has been done by the Government to carry out the recommendations of the Committee.

I am directed to report: The Committee regret that, after their report of last session on this case, the Government not did not take immediate action against Edward Francis Ward for the misappropriation of the estate intrusted to him by the late Mr. Justice Chapman; but, as it appears the said E. ff. Ward has left the colony, the Committee are of opinion that the Government should at once make inquiry into the present condition of the estate of the late J. S. Douglas, and that any deficiency that may appear to have arisen in consequence of the misappropriation of the funds of the estate by Edward Francis Ward be made good out of the public revenue.

19th July, 1882.

No. 105.—Petition of THOMAS TELFORD, Wellington.

THE petitioner states that in July, 1868, he was appointed an Inspector of Sheep for Wairarapa, and continued to hold the appointment until the 30th September, 1881, at which date, without any previous notice, he was informed that Mr. Sutton would relieve him of his duties. He is not aware of anything that could justify such harshness. He elected to take compensation for loss of office, being under the impression that his provincial service would count. He states that he has received compensation for his services under the General Government, and now prays that compensation may be granted for his provincial service.

I am directed to report: Having inquired into and considered the case of the petitioner, the Committee are of opinion that he was rather harshly dealt with in being removed from office without any sufficient reason to justify such removal. The Committee cannot recommend that payment be made for loss of office for the term during which he was a provincial officer, as it appears he continued in the Government service from 1875 to 1881, and thus virtually became a General Government officer and entitled to the usual compensation authorized by law, which he received. The Committee desire to draw the attention of the Government to the organization of the Stock Branch of the Colonial Secretary's Department. It appears, from the evidence before the Committee, that this branch is not in a satisfactory state of organization: no permanent officer appears to be at the head of it. Nominally the Superintending Inspector is at the head, but practically he is not so, as the office work is under the control of another officer, who appears to have no defined official position, and is not responsible to the Superintending Inspector or even to the permanent Under-Secretary. The appointment of Sheep